


January 9, 2005

Freedom Watch

Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan



*MEDEVAC crews
treat patients,
save lives
Pages 8/9*



Spc. Cheryl Ransford

Healing hands

Col. Steve Jones, TF Victory surgeon cell command surgeon, checks a man's side during a CMA in Sperkey village Dec. 9. Although the CMA was the first assistance the people of this village in eastern Afghanistan had received from the Coalition, more than 1,000 people came to be treated.

Contents



MEDEVAC crews stand ready to save lives throughout Afghanistan. Here, Staff Sgt. Vicki Wood, 68th Med. Co. flight medic, places an oxygen mask on her patient, 12-year-old Abudul Mulek, while his father, Gul Mohamamad, looks on during a Dec. 22 flight from FOB Ripley to Kandahar Airfield in southern Afghanistan. Mulek was being transferred to Kandahar Airfield for observation following surgery at FOB Ripley.

See cover story Pages 8/9
Staff Sgt. Monica R. Garreau

Page 3: Soldiers deliver humanitarian assistance, holiday cheer to Jildalek village

Page 4: Army Reserve Affairs hosts town hall meeting to inform citizen-Soldiers

Page 5: TF-168 medic soldiers through deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan

Page 6: Soldiers receive upgraded, field expedient equipment through REF

Page 7: Finance reaches service members at forward locations



Page 10: Engineers improve quality of life at Forward Operating Base Cobra

Page 11: Afghan students demonstrate free speech in Kandahar

Page 12: PERSCO team keeps tabs on Operation Enduring Freedom Airmen

Page 13: Safeguarding the Coalition: Regular medical care prevents illness

Page 14: Aviation mechanics keep air cavalry in the sky



Freedom Watch

Freedom Watch is the weekly publication of Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan.

CFC-A Commander – Lt. Gen. David Barno
Public Affairs Officer – Col. Tom R. MacKenzie

Freedom Watch, an Army publication, is published each Sunday by the 17th Public Affairs Detachment at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan. Printed circulation is 6,000 copies per week.

In accordance with AR 360-1, this Army newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military overseas.

Contents of the *Freedom Watch* are not necessarily the official view of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Army.

Deadline for submissions is 0730 Zulu each Friday. All submissions are subject to editing by the 17th Public Affairs Detachment, located in Bldg. 425, Room 107, Bagram Air Base. We can be reached at DSN 318-231-3338.

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Visit the CENTCOM Web site at www.centcom.mil and click on the *Freedom Watch* or Forces in Afghanistan link at the bottom of the page to get to the *Freedom Watch*. To be added to the weekly distribution list, e-mail stumpc@baf.afgn.army.mil.

Soldiers spread holiday cheer to Afghans

Story and photos by
Spc. Cheryl Ransford
17th Public Affairs Detachment

JILDALEK, Afghanistan — The holiday season is traditionally a time of caring and sharing with others. Being deployed to Afghanistan didn't change that for many service members.

Dec. 24, 2004, is a day more than 200 U.S. service members from around Afghanistan will likely never forget. That day, they visited Jildalek, a village that has been adopted by Task Force Pirate, to deliver songs of cheer and gifts to the children of the village.

"The holidays are a time of sharing and giving to others, and that's what this day was all about," said 2nd Lt. Mike Sheley, 455th Expeditionary Ordnance Group executive officer. "We came out here to share a little piece of our holiday traditions with the people of Afghanistan, and give the kids toys, clothes and shoes."

While humanitarian assistance has been provided by the Soldiers of TF Pirate several times, this visit had a special touch — the spirit of the season.

Along with handing out gifts to the children, the service members also took

time to share some traditional holiday songs with the villagers.

The donations that were delivered to the people included shoes, socks, blankets and toys.

"Sharing with the locals is part of building a lasting relationship of understanding and progress," said Sheley. "Being a part of something that brings a smile to the face of a child makes everything we do worth it."

"Any time people from diverse backgrounds and cultures can talk and share is a time that will promote peace and understanding," said Sgt. Theodore E. Reed, 221st Ordnance Company. "Being deployed to Afghanistan has shown all of us that there is more to life and the world than just what we have seen back home. This type of mission can only add to the progress the Coalition has already made."

Following the traditional Christmas songs, the people of Jildalek shared their culture, playing the drums and dancing for the service members.

The performance for the service members was in gratitude for the gifts they brought.

"With all that has been done for the people of Jildalek, sharing our traditions with you is our way of paying you back," said Nagibala, Sarobi Police.

While it was a day of sharing and gift giving by all, there was still a long-term goal that every mission of this type is working toward.

History has shown that "the best way to end a war is to make friends," said Reed. "By continuing this type of mission here and around the country we are improving (the) chance of one day having peace in Afghanistan."



Clockwise from above: A CH-47 Chinook takes off from Bagram Air Base on its way to Jildalek village with a conex full of donated shoes, clothing, toys and food Dec. 24. The donations included Chief Warrant Officer Guy Stricklan, TF Pirate, hands candy and a toy to a Jildalek girl. Afghan children look through the bags of clothing and toys they received from U.S. service members in Jildalek Dec. 24.

Information flows during ARA town hall meeting

Story and photo by
Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — With questions about pay, mobilizations, promotions and retention, National Guard and Reserve Soldiers gathered Dec. 21 at the Clamshell on Bagram Air Base seeking answers.

"We will always do what we need to do to help the Soldiers," said Master Sgt. Gregory Jacobs, ARA retention noncommissioned officer, to the Soldiers participating in the first Army Reserve Affairs town hall meeting.

The meeting afforded the ARA staff an opportunity to present current information about pertinent topics to the Soldiers, and it gave the Soldiers an opportunity to ask important questions.

"I've learned a lot of important information about reenlistment bonuses," said Sgt. Melanie Vaillencourt, 450th Military Police Company personnel noncommissioned officer. "I'm going to be able to give my Soldiers a lot of valuable information that will help them make some decisions."

During the meeting, members of the ARA presented the National Guard's new reenlistment bonus incentive program, which became effective Dec. 18.

The new program allows some National Guard Soldiers who reenlist during their deployment to receive a lump-sum, tax-free bonus of up to \$15,000. But this new policy is only expected to be in effect for a short-period of time due to budgeting constraints.

"I will do everything I can to get that Soldier a bonus," said Jacobs, advising leaders to refer their Soldiers to the ARA office with questions about reenlistment. He also noted that not every Soldier will be eligible for a reenlistment bonus.

ARA staff also noted that there has been no change to the reenlistment programs for the U.S. Army Reserve.

Another topic that received a lot of attention during the meeting was the Contingency Operations Temporary Tour of Active Duty extension program. This program allows National Guard and Reserve Soldiers to voluntarily extend mobilization. Policy



Master Sgt. Scott Spencer, National Guard career counselor, answers questions for National Guard and Reserve Soldiers at the town hall meeting Dec. 21.

requires units to demobilize Soldiers after no more than 24 months of active-duty service. But COTTAD gives individual Soldiers the opportunity to extend their time on active-duty status beyond 24-months for issues like redeploying with the rest of their unit, rather than by themselves.

Promotions were also a focal point for the Soldiers at the meeting.

"How will mobilizations affect promotions?" asked one NCO.

Soldiers who are mobilized can get promoted either in the position they are filling on a deployment or to a position at their home station. Some noncommissioned officer professional development requirements for promotion are waived during mobilization, such as the basic noncommissioned officer course. However, there are time constraints for attending these schools and for finding positions upon redeployment, said Master Sgt. Scott A. Spencer, National Guard career counselor.

"If you get promoted out here, you have one year to find a position with that rank back home or you may end up giving up a stripe," he said.

The information provided at the meeting gave many

leaders and unit representatives the opportunity to inform their Soldiers what to expect, especially during their mobilizations.

"I came here today to get some answers to finance questions," said Spc. Daniel Brown, a Company A, 367th Engineer Battalion, unit representative. "I'm also going to have the chance now to knock away some of the rumors that have been flying around about different policies."

For the questions that didn't get answered during the meeting, the ARA staff encouraged Soldiers to visit them at their office located in Motel Six on Bagram Air Base. They also stressed that they will visit forward operating bases to answer questions as well.

"A lot of times we don't always get all the information," said Sgt. 1st Class Cassandra Thompson, 317th Military History Detachment representative. "As leaders, we may think we've informed our Soldiers of everything, but it's good to reiterate as well. This meeting is helping not only with that, but with giving us new information."

While another town hall meeting has not been scheduled, the ARA staff plans to make it a quarterly occurrence.

Army Reserve Affairs

Room 207, Motel Six
Bagram Air Base
DSN: 318-231-4353

National Guard or Reserve units throughout Afghanistan interested in scheduling briefings, or those with questions for ARA personnel, can visit the office or call.

Soldier maintains focus through Iraq, Afghanistan

Story by Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl
17th Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM, Afghanistan — When Staff Sgt. Joseph P. Buhain volunteered to deploy, he didn't know what he was in for.

Eight months and two combat zones later, he has experience and memories he will never leave behind.

"I volunteered to deploy in another medic's place," said Buhain, a Task Force 168 medic.

Buhain, a respiratory specialist from Rochester, Minn., was activated as a medic, one of his two military occupational specialties. He received just four days to prepare before he reported to Fort Hood, Texas, for mobilization and to meet his new chain of command. TF 168 was set to deploy to Afghanistan, where Buhain would serve as a medical augmentee.

After reporting to Fort Hood, a paperwork mishap led Buhain to Fort Bliss, Texas, where he received orders to Baghdad, Iraq.

"When we landed in Baghdad, we took enemy fire," said Buhain. "The whole time I was thinking, 'I'm not even supposed to be here.'"

Buhain knew he belonged with TF 168 in Afghanistan, and he also knew it



Courtesy photo

Staff Sgt. Joseph P. Buhain, TF 168 medic, poses for a picture during his time in Iraq. Buhain served for five months in Iraq before joining TF 168 in Afghanistan.

would take time for the proper orders to make their way into his hands. While he waited for this to happen, Buhain found a home and a job with the 31st

Combat Support Hospital.

He was surrounded by the horrors of war, but determined to do what he could to help.

"Iraq was an eye-opener for me," he said. "In the month of May I dealt with 65 deaths."

That's just one month of the five Buhain spent in Iraq.

"I saw so much horror," he said.

"Sometimes I knelt down to pray with other Soldiers. I held the hands of others during their last moments."

Through it all, Buhain never lost his faith.

"Iraq was very desponding, but I learned a lot. I learned to respect the value of life, to respect our country. I learned what our flag really means," he said. "I learned that old or young, it doesn't matter. It's about unity, taking it one day at a time to survive."

Buhain also learned to respect other Coalition members.

"I watched Poles, Australians, Brits, and even my own Filipinos die," he said. "Iraq was hard, but touching. If I could go back in time, I would go again. My brothers are still there fighting."

But Buhain now has another role to fill. After five months in Iraq, he finally received the correct orders, arriving in

See Buhain, Page 15

Enduring Voices

Which leader do you admire for their contribution to society?



Pfc. Philip Colletti

58th MP Co.

"Christopher Reeves for what he did for people who are paralyzed and how he added to the research efforts."



Maj. Timothy Presley

CJTF-76, ANA 2nd Bde. ETT

"President Bush because he is willing to take a moral stand."



Spc. William Graves

2nd Bn., 265th Rgt., Fwd. 2

"Martin Luther King because he stood for what he believed in despite persecution."



Pfc. Daniel Kidd

58th MP Co.

"The small town leaders you never hear about for helping people because they want to, not for money or fame."

Equipping the warfighter

REF team speeds improved equipment to Soldiers

Story and photo by
Staff Sgt. Monica R. Garreau
17th Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Fielding a new piece of equipment to the entire Army can take up to 10 years. But in the Global War on Terrorism, Soldiers need updated equipment — and they need it now.

That's where the Rapid Equipping Force comes in. Based at Kandahar Airfield in southern Afghanistan, the team of civilian technicians and Soldiers talk to service members operating in the combat zone to find out what equipment or improvements to existing systems would improve their ability to successfully complete their missions.

Once a need is identified and passed on to the REF team, the technicians either design the equipment or look for readily available, commercial,



Spc. Jason Wiegand, 209th MP Co., uses the GRAMCAM to inspect a vehicle outside Kandahar Airfield. The device was developed to replace the previously used convex mirrors.

off-the-shelf equipment that will ultimately make a Soldier's job much easier.

"The history of REF, particularly in Afghanistan, has made a difference," said Lt. Col. Marty Holland, REF officer in charge.

Whether it is a small project requiring a simple fabrication of cables or a more sophisticated radio system enhancer, the technicians get right to work to bring new technology to the Soldiers. "One of the biggest things

we do is visit Soldiers and unit commanders in the field to find out what the real need is, and see if we can help them out," said Sgt. 1st Class Derrick Bell, REF noncommissioned officer in charge.

A recent project, for example, is the ground reconnaissance and monitoring camera, or GRAMCAM, which uses an infrared camera and monitor system to view the undercarriage of vehicles.

The idea for the GRAMCAM came when the Soldiers of the 209th Military Police Company needed a replacement for the convex mirror used to inspect the undercarriage of vehicles entering Kandahar Airfield. A replacement that would work in all conditions, including those with little to no light.

The system was given its

See *REF*, Page 15

Religious Services Around the CJOA

Kabul Compound

Sunday

0500 - Small Group Study
0630 - Traditional Prot.
1000 - Prot. Service - U.S. Emb.
1330 - Catholic Mass - Italian Emb.
1430 - Prot. Contemporary Praise
1530 - Small Group Study 201
1530 - Small Group Study 301

Tuesday

0930 - Chaplain's Call

Wednesday

1400 - Small Group Study 401

Friday

0830 - Latter-Day Saints
1330 - Jewish Service
1330 - Small Group Study 101

Saturday

0930 - Chaplain's Call
1130 - Catholic Mass

* All times
Zulu/GMT

Camp Phoenix

Sunday

0430 - Catholic (Italian)
0530 - Non-Denominational Prot.
1330 - Catholic (French)
1530 - Non-Denominational Prot.

Tuesday

1430 - Bible Study

Wednesday

1430 - Gospel Bible Study

Saturday

1430 - Gospel Worship Service

FOB Salerno

Sunday

0300 - Foundations Bible Class
0400 - Traditional Prot. Worship
0530 - Catholic Mass
0730 - Latter-Day Saints
0830 - Gospel Service
1400 - Inspirational Movie Night

Saturday

1500 - Contemporary Prot.

Bagram Air Base

Sunday

0400 - Liturgical Prot.
0530 - Roman Catholic Mass
0830 - Latter-Day Saints
0700 - Traditional Prot.
1115 - Korean Language Prot.
1300 - Gospel Service

Monday

1400 - Gospel Choir Rehearsal

Tuesday

1400 - Gospel Bible Study
1545 - Prot. Music Rehearsal

Wednesday

1600 - Catholic Music Rehearsal

Thursday

1430 - Gospel Choir Rehearsal

Friday

1430 - Jewish Prayer
1500 - Women's Bible Study

Saturday

0500 - Seventh-Day Adventist
1330 - Korean Choir Rehearsal
1515 - Roman Catholic Mass
1630 - Prot. Choir Rehearsal
Daily, Monday-Friday
0700 - Roman Catholic Mass
0745 - Noon-Day prayer

Kandahar Airfield

Sunday

0430 - Catholic Mass
0500 - Bible Study (325th FSB)
0630 - Prot. Worship
1330 - Gospel Choir Practice
1400 - Sunday School
1530 - Gospel Service

Monday

1300 - Gospel Choir Practice

Tuesday

1430 - Purpose-driven Life Study
1300 - Gospel Choir Practice
1430 - Praise Team Practice
1530 - Bible Study

Wednesday

1300 - Gospel Choir Practice
1430 - Praise Team Practice
1530 - Prot. Worship

Thursday

1430 - Praise Team Practice
1500 - Latter-Day Saints

Friday

0830 - Islamic Prayers
1330 - Jewish Sabbath Prayers

Saturday

0400 - Men's Breakfast
1300 - Catholic Mass
1430 - Praise Team Practice

Daily, Monday-Friday

0330 - Catholic Mass

Finance field mi\$\$\$ion\$ get ca\$h to troop\$

Story by
Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl
17th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RIPLEY, Afghanistan — Since April, Soldiers from the 125th Finance Battalion have conducted more than 100 pay missions to forward sites throughout Afghanistan.

Without access to conventional finance offices, service members at forward operating bases rely on these missions to receive cash and address pay concerns.

“Whatever we can do in our office, we can do at the FOBs,” said Pfc. Devin Jones, Kandahar Airfield finance specialist.

This includes casual pay, cashing checks, savings deposit plans and pay inquiries.

During a December mission to a forward operating base, Jones was personally responsible for about \$80,000, which was used to disburse casual pay and cash checks. Ultimately, the goal was to give service members access to cash.

“Money boosts morale,” said

Jones. “Sometimes they want it for bazaars. Other times they want it because they are coming back (to Kandahar) and want to be able to eat at Burger King.”

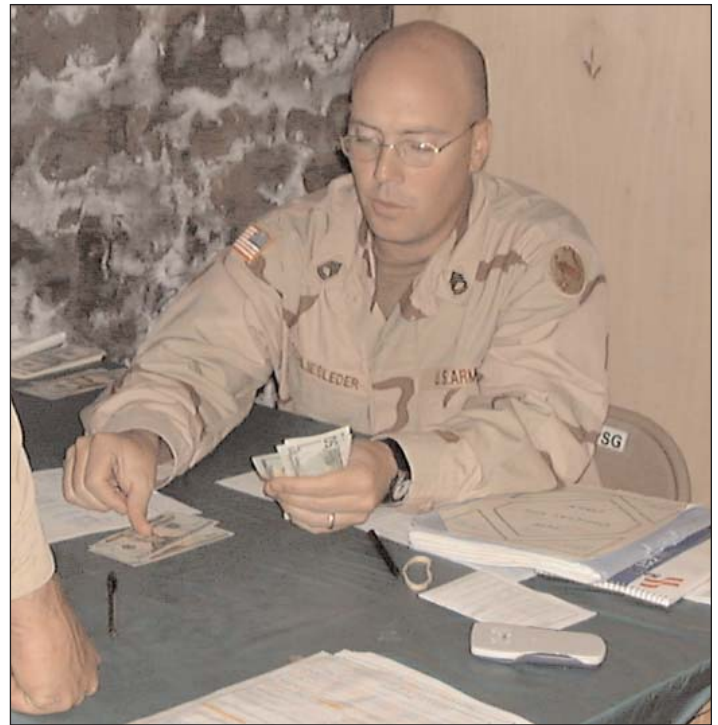
An appreciation echoed by Soldiers who benefited from the access to cash during this particular pay mission.

“Being able to get cash definitely helps with morale,” said Sgt. Kevin L. Wildman, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, team leader. “It helps the Soldiers get through the days, knowing that they can go to the (post exchange) conex and get the things they need or want.”

Regardless of why the Soldiers want the money, they can only receive it during pay missions, which occur three to five times a month for four to five days at a time.

The other important service the finance Soldiers provide is handling pay inquiries.

“During our visits, we are better able to resolve pay problems,” said Sgt. 1st Class Albert Schliesleder, Kandahar finance operations chief. “We’re also able to receive and process documents a lot faster than if the



Courtesy Photo

Sgt. 1st Class Albert Schliesleder, 125th Finance Battalion, Kandahar Airfield finance NCOIC, issues casual pay to a Soldier during a finance field mission.

Soldiers had to wait to come see us.”

The major incentive for the pay missions is that they add to the readiness of individual units.

“If we didn’t get out to see the service members, they would have no other way of getting funds,” said Schliesleder. “If they had to come back here, it would interrupt operations.”

For leaders in the field, that is definitely a benefit.

“I was able to help one of my Soldiers get back-pay when finance came out here,” said Sgt. Otis J. Petty, Company C, 65th Engineer Battalion, currently working at FOB Ripley. “We definitely appreciated them coming to us, recognizing that our Soldiers are usually out on missions. Finance took that step to come out to us.”

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

Soldiers from Co. A, 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt., pull security in Oruzgan province. The “Bobcats” from 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt., are part of Combined Task Force Bronco, which has responsibility for security and stabilization efforts, as well as combat operations, in southern Afghanistan.

*Photo by Spc. Melvin Krambule
Co. A, 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt.*

If you have high quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to stumpc@baf.afgn.army.mil. Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.



MEDEVAC

Crews stand by to save lives

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Monica R. Garreau
17th Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — MEDEVAC!
MEDEVAC! MEDEVAC!

At the sound of those three words over the radio, the tiny operations center of the Kandahar Airfield detachment of the 68th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) springs to life.

The Soldiers of the on-call medical evacuation crew grab their equipment and rush out to their UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter. Each member of the four-man crew completes his final pre-flight preparations and, within minutes, they are off to evacuate their patient.

“When we as MEDEVACs get alerted, there’s some kind of severe trauma or life-threatening injury,” said Staff Sgt. Lonnie Bennett, a 68th Med. Co. flight medic.

On this day in late December, the mission is to transport 12-year-old Abudul Mulek from Forward Operating Base Ripley to the hospital at the MEDEVAC detachment’s home base on Kandahar Airfield in southern Afghanistan. Mulek suffered from a severe case of appendicitis and underwent surgery at FOB Ripley. He was transferred to Kandahar for observation.

Although there is no such thing as a routine mission for the MEDEVAC crews, this one was relatively simple — the patient had already received the operation and was in stable condition.

But the contribution they make to Operation Enduring Freedom is not bound by severity of the patients’ wounds, rather their ability to save the lives of their fellow service



An air crew from 68th Med. Co. prepares their UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter for missions to evacuate injured personnel at risk of losing their life, limbs or eyesight. Thorough aircraft maintenance is a vital part of mission success.

members and Afghans alike.

“Our concern is to get out there and help whoever it is,” said Sgt. Shawn Hurst, 68th Med. Co. operations sergeant.

“It’s a matter of saving a life, regardless of who it is.”

No matter who they are saving, the reaction of the crews is always the same.

The mindset of the MEDEVAC crews is very steadfast, said Chief Warrant Officer Phil Schantin, a 68th Med. Co. pilot.

“Everyone’s very much into the mission. It’s very focused what you’re going to do,” he said.

“The fact that whether they get medical care and live or not is based on us.”

While the two pilots are at the controls, giving the patient as smooth a ride as possible, the crew chief is watching for enemy activity and anything that may hinder the flight. Meanwhile, the sole medic onboard is working hard to save the patient.

“When it comes down to it, the medics keep them alive,” said Schantin.

Sustaining the life of a patient is an “adrenaline-rushing, heart-pounding, what-if situation,” said Bennett. “It’s just you back there, with your nose to the grindstone, doing your best.”



Staff Sgt. Vicki Wood (right), 68th Med. Co. flight medic, and a medic from FOB Ripley, load 12-year-old Abudul Mulek onto a MEDEVAC helicopter for transport to Kandahar Airfield, where he was held for observation following an emergency appendectomy.



Each Soldier in 68th Med. Co. has a different mission they consider most memorable, but their recount of the event always includes the joy of saving someone's life.

Staff Sgt. Josh Davis, a 68th Med. Co. crew chief, described a recent mission where two U.S. Soldiers lost their lives due to an explosion caused by an improvised explosive device. While the two died on the scene, two more sustained severe injuries, but held on long enough for the MEDEVAC crew to rescue them.

"That we could get them to the hospital in time to save their lives was just... If you get one mission like that during one rotation, it makes it all worth it," said Davis.

"It's the most meaningful job that anybody can have, because we're saving lives every day," he said.

The flight medics always accompany their patient into the hospital to pass vital information on to the doctors. But the rest of the crews' concern doesn't stop once the patient leaves the aircraft.

The pilots and crew chiefs often pay a visit to the patient to see how he is holding up and to get a sense of closure on their mission. One of these visits deeply moved Schantin when he talked to the father of a little boy whose life was saved, thanks to the evacuation by his crew.

"That was a good feeling," said Schantin. "You could see (the appreciation) in his face."

A good day in the MEDEVAC world is judged by a lack of missions, because it usually means that no one in their area sustained life-threatening injuries that day. But they also real-



Clockwise from top: Staff Sgt. Vicki Wood, 68th Med. Co. crew chief, makes her patient, 12-year-old Abudul Mulek, more comfortable during a Dec. 22 flight from FOB Ripley to Kandahar Airfield. Wood inspects the oxygen tank aboard a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter to ensure it's ready for the next mission. Spc. Andrew Ferguson (left), a 68th Med. Co. crew chief, and Wood test the rescue hoist on a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter at Kandahar Airfield.



ize they are operating in a combat zone and there aren't going to always be good days. Job satisfaction must then come from their ability to help those in need.

"It's a double-edged sword," said Schantin. "Your business is based on people's misery, and the fact that we are able to go out there and provide life-saving care to people is very gratifying. But if I never had to go anywhere because nobody ever got hurt, I'd be happy with that too."

But Hurst summed it up best.

"No business is good business," he said.

Vertical engineers build from the ground, up

National Guard unit works to improve standard of living

Story and photo by Spc. Dijon Rolle
17th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE COBRA, Afghanistan — Vertical engineers from Company C, 528th Engineer Battalion, are working diligently to improve living conditions for Coalition forces serving at Forward Operating Base Cobra in southcentral Afghanistan.

The Louisiana National Guard unit has been busy constructing housing, installing electricity, and building Morale, Welfare, and Recreation and dining facilities for Cobra's troops since October. The team of electricians, plumbers and carpenters travel throughout the country bringing hardstand buildings with solid roofs where there were none before.

The group says their mission is simple. They want to make life easier for the Soldiers.

"After coming home from a mission, it's important to have a roof over your head, access to a hot shower — the basics," said Staff Sgt. Toby Green, Co. C, 528th Eng. Bn., vertical construction noncommissioned officer in charge.

"It makes their job a little easier know-



Staff Sgt. Toby Green, Co. C, 528th Eng. Bn., constructs a wall inside a Soldier's living quarters at FOB Cobra.

ing that these things are in place for them. It's a touch of home out in the field," he said.

In addition to constructing several of the wood structures on the base, the engineers have also installed doors and roofs on existing buildings, and rewired the electrical circuits on several of them.

The engineers' ongoing work is having a positive impact on everyone living and working on FOB Cobra.

"I appreciate everything these guys are

doing," said Pfc. Sylvester Cook, Co. C, 2nd Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, infantryman. "Every day, you can kinda see the base taking shape and improving. This is our home for the next few months. And right now, it's all we have, so we want it to be nice."

"The 528th Engineers have been awesome," said Capt. Josh Bookout, Co. C, 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt., commander.

"We would not have the quality of life that we do now if it weren't for them and the work they do. We appreciate everything that they've done and continue to do to improve conditions here on FOB Cobra. They've really become a part of our family," he said.

The engineers themselves say the work they're doing is helping them just as much as it is helping the other Soldiers. Especially since this is the first major deployment for many members of the unit.

"It's been an experience for sure. There have been ups and downs, long, hard hours, but in the end it's worth it," said Spc. Malcolm Fussell, Co. C, 528th Eng. Bn., carpenter. "I've been able to do both carpentry and electrical work, so I can help out wherever, and we can get that much more done. It's a good thing, and it makes you feel good. The guys appreciate it."

"We've learned a lot, and the Soldiers really appreciate what you do out here — and they let us know," said Green. "That goes a long way."



Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl

Cultural exchange

Lt. Col. Todd Miller, Combined Task Force Bronco, shares a conversation with two students from the Sheirzai Institute last month. Miller visited the institute with other Coalition members to distribute school supplies and listen to speeches presented by some of the students.

Afghan students raise voices on freedom

Coalition contributes to speech contest

Story by Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl
17th Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR CITY, Afghanistan — Nearly two months after the historic democratic Afghan presidential election, students at Sheirzai Institute in Kandahar city voiced their opinions on democracy and freedom Dec. 1.

Members of the Coalition joined the boys and girls as they celebrated democracy in Afghanistan by exercising their freedom of speech.

"We wanted to help get the kids excited about their freedoms," said Capt. Todd Schmidt, Battery A, 1st Battalion, 62nd Air Defense Artillery Regiment, commander.

Schmidt was approached by Eshanullah Eshan, the school director, about a speech contest. As a result, the "I Choose Freedom" speech contest was created.

The students all worked on their speeches for more than two weeks, said Eshan. In the end, the faculty narrowed it down to eight winners — four girls and four boys. These students presented their speeches in front of their more than 2,000 classmates, Coalition forces and the governor of Kandahar province Mohammad Pashtun.

The four boys received bicycles, donated by the Coalition, while the four girls received gift certificates to a local tailor.

In addition to the speech presentation, the Coalition also distributed backpacks and school supplies to all the students.

"The (Soldiers) are giving us something good for education," said 17-year-old Dinmammad Delahmad, an eighth-grader at the institute. Delahmad, who has been attending school for eight years, recognizes the importance of a good education.

"It's important to learn to do something good," he said. "That way I will be able to get a better job, help advance my country and my family."

With the pens, pencils and notebooks he received, Delahmad will have a greater opportunity to get a better education.

The knowledge that they are helping students like Delahmad means a lot to members of the Coalition.

"It's awesome to be here helping these kids," said Staff Sgt. Jessica Vanderberg, Company C, 325th Forward Support Battalion, her eyes lighting up as she interacted with the students. "I work with sick patients all the time and I know I'm helping them, but this is different. There's no negative side to this."

"We're here trying to help, to show good faith to the people, and that's what is happening today."



Spc. Claudia K. Bullard



Above: 1st Sgt. Freddie Florentz (left), 209th MP Co., and Staff Sgt. Jennifer Brooks, Kandahar PRT, distribute backpacks at Sheirzai Institute.

Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl

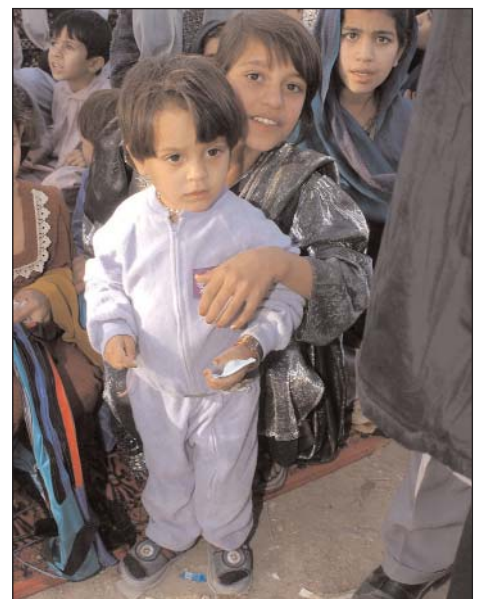
Top: A student at Sheirzai Institute presents her speech about democracy and freedom to more than 2,000 classmates, teachers and Coalition members in Kandahar city.

Left: Staff Sgt. Jessica Vanderberg, Co. C, 325th FSB, unloads backpacks for the students.

Right: A Sheirzai student clutches her ticket entitling her to a backpack filled with school supplies. More than 2,000 backpacks were distributed by Coalition forces, along with prizes for the best speeches.



Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl



Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl

PERSCO team tracks Airmen in Afghanistan

Story and photo by
Air Force Staff Sgt. Jennifer Lindsey
455th Air Expeditionary Wing

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — They don't fly A-10s, build bombs or conduct perimeter patrols, but the Personnel Support for Contingency Operations team here processes the documents that make it possible for pilots, ammo troops and security forces here to support Operation Enduring Freedom.

From hail to farewell, Bagram Air Base's two-member PERSCO team has made it their business to manage files on the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing's nearly 700 troops. The majority of them work and live in the base's Air Force sector, Camp Cunningham, and about 100 who serve at forward operating bases throughout Afghanistan.

Being chosen to serve on a PERSCO team is special for personnelists, and few ever get the opportunity to serve in a combat zone, said Master Sgt. Carolyn Henriques, team chief and 19-year veteran who is serving on her first deployment. Airmen selected for deployment attend three weeks of "combat personnelist" training.

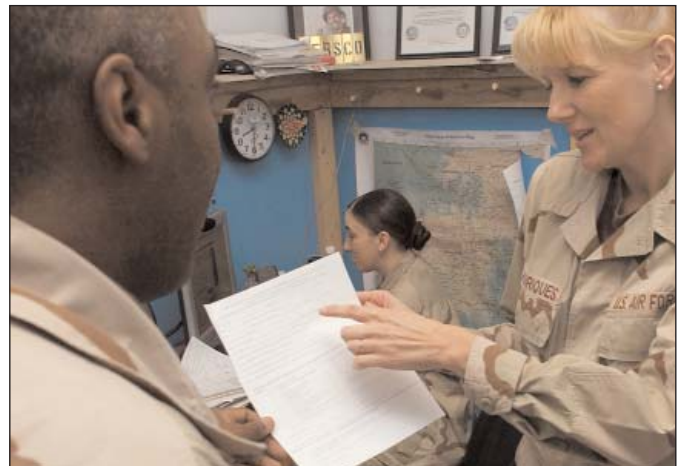
The team's mission starts with inprocessing each of the wing's Air Expeditionary Force active duty and Air Force Reserve troops the day they step onto the airfield.

Sometimes the team works with inbound troops well before they arrive. Airmen slated for an AEF rotation should have the names and contact information of the people they're replacing about 60 days before they head out for deployment, but this isn't always the case.

To ensure rotations happen as smoothly as possible, PERSCO plays the middleman by providing the deploying Airmen points of contact, said Henriques.

To understand the dos and don'ts of their new four-month home, PERSCO provides new arrivals a combat orientation that includes information about minefields, unexploded ordnance and attack postures.

"It's a long meeting, but we share important information about the base. Combat



Air Force Master Sgt. Carolyn Henriques, 455th AEW, PERSCO team chief, shows Air Force Master Sgt. Michael Varnado the inprocessing paperwork his replacement will complete upon his or her arrival here.

zones are very different from what you'll find at home," said Airman 1st Class Angelique Smith, PERSCO team member.

Although it's not technically part of their mission, when those who are deployed are no longer "newbies," the team continues assisting wing troops by processing sustainment paperwork. Troops commonly request help with applications for career job reservations, retraining, service extensions and reenlistments.

Although they willingly help Airmen with such issues, the most important courtesy

See *PERSCO*, Page 14

Dari/Pashto phrase of the week



Dari

How are you?

Chi-hal darid (Chee-hawl dah-rid)

I am well.

Khub hastem (Koob haws-tem)

Pashto

How are you?

Sa-hal da (Saw-hawl dah)

I am well.

Za Shaem (Zah shay-ehm)

Eid Qurban is a Muslim holiday which lasts three days beginning around Jan. 19, depending on the moon's visibility. During Eid Qurban, a goat or cow is sacrificed in thanks to God. When the animal is sacrificed, the meat is separated into three parts. One part goes to the poor, the second to relatives and the third stays with the family. The three days are filled with eating and visiting with friends and family.

Prevention keeps Coalition fit to fight

Safeguarding the Coalition

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Jennifer Lindsey
455th Air Expeditionary Wing

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Bacteria, viruses and assorted oozes — the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Flight Medicine Team definitely deals with the seedier side of life here.

The recommendations they offer Airmen on how to prevent catching “the crud” are reminiscent of a mother’s advice.

Wash your hands frequently and keep them away from your eyes, nose and mouth.

Keep your room clean by placing dirty clothes in a hamper. Dust often. Wipe up those food crumbs. Change your socks at least daily and use antifungal powder. Wear shower shoes.

Get your shots — influenza, smallpox and all other mandatory vaccines.

Tell the doctor about your troubles. Documenting illness trends is important in preventing or preparing for possible epidemics.

The simplest and most effective prevention against influenza is vaccination, said Air Force Dr. (Maj.) Philip Lundy, an Air Force Reserve flight surgeon working with the 455th AEWFM.

“I know a lot of people don’t want the shot because they think that they catch the flu from it, but it’s an unfounded fear,” said the doctor, whose civilian job is as a primary care doctor at the New Orleans Veteran’s Administration Medical Center.

“If those who shy away from getting the shot could see the (personnel) who didn’t get vaccinated and wound up suffering from the flu as a result — they’d be lining up at our door immediately,” said Air Force Senior Airman Jason Weiss, 455th AEWFM medical technician.

Even a few service members down due to illness can present challenges to coworkers, who will have to work extra



Air Force Senior Airman Jason Weiss, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing medical technician, bandages Air Force Maj. Peter Galindez's finger.

hours to fill in for sick comrades.

Security forces here are the most proactive squadron in taking advantage of preventive medicine to keep its troops healthy, said Weiss, who maintains the clinic records.

“Simply put, ‘GET-R-DONE!’ ” said Air Force Master Sgt. Anthony Frazier, quoting the 455th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron’s motto.

“Vaccinations are designed to protect people, and following this simple instruction is just too easy,” he said.

Another key element in preventing illness at home station or at a deployed location is to maintain a healthy immune system.

“I suggest that everyone exercise regularly, hydrate, eat a well-balanced diet and get plenty of sleep,” said Weiss who is also a certified personal trainer.

When service members do catch “the crud,” they shouldn’t hesitate to visit sick call, said Lundy.

Those fighting common colds, respiratory ailments and sports injuries, or other ailments, can visit the “docs” during the clinic’s sick-call hours. Medical care is also available 24-hours a day at the various medical clinics throughout Afghanistan.

“You do yourself and your coworkers a disservice by not seeing us and getting proper medical care, because you’re not functioning at your best, and you’re spreading the illness to others,” said Lundy.



Air Force Dr. (Maj.) Philip Lundy, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Flight Medicine Clinic flight surgeon, checks a pilot's smallpox vaccination site to ensure it's blistering properly. The two-member flight medicine team oversees the health of about 650 deployed Airmen on Bagram Air Base.

Helicopter mechanics keep rotors turning

Story and photos by Spc. Cheryl Ransford
17th Public Affairs Detachment

SHINDAND AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Keeping aircraft mission-capable means having a staff of highly trained maintenance personnel to meet the demands of the different levels of maintenance.

At Shindand Airfield in western Afghanistan, this is a task that often requires the help of Company C, 25th Aviation Regiment, Soldiers.

The aviation mechanics here are trained to perform intermediate maintenance on the aircraft or parts of the aircraft, said Sgt. 1st Class Troy Küster, Co. C, 25th Avn. Rgt., first sergeant.

Most repairs done by the Soldiers of Co. C, 25th Avn. Rgt., are repairs level one (unit maintenance) mechanics aren't trained to perform, such as working on the black boxes and weapons systems of the aircraft. The intricate, and sometimes delicate, parts must first be removed from the aircraft by an authorized mechanic and then taken to an indoor shop for maintenance.

"If the services we are able to provide to the air crews weren't available in Shindand, they would be forced to send parts back to (Kandahar Airfield) for maintenance," he said. "In doing so, the repair time would be increased, which would limit the number of aircraft available for missions."

While some items are still sent in for maintenance, that number is drastically reduced by the presence of the mechanics.

Maintenance done on the aircraft is broken down into three different maintenance shops. The different levels of maintenance are AVUM, aviation unit maintenance; AVIM, aviation intermediate maintenance, which are available here; and depot, where the item is sent to Kandahar for major repairs.

While most repairs won't need to go straight to the highest repair shop, there are some items on each type of aircraft that just can't be repaired by unit mechanics, said Sgt. 1st Class Martin Davila, Co. C, 25th Avn. Rgt., armament platoon sergeant.

Since 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, doesn't have intermediate maintenance within



Spc. Conrad Minter, Company C, 25th Avn. Rgt., inventories parts while reorganizing and restocking the bench stock in the mechanics' work area.

the regiment to work on their OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters, they requested Co. C, 25th Avn. Rgt., to attach a team to them that could assist with repairs during the deployment, said Davila.

"With us attached to the unit, the aviators are able to get the aircraft back up flying sooner with repairs being done on-site," he said.

Along with repairing the aircraft, Co. C, 25th Avn. Rgt., also assists with providing security around the base.

Along with guarding the front gate, the Soldiers of Co. C, 25th Avn. Rgt., installed the wire that now surrounds the perimeter of Shindand Airfield.

"Even though we are responsible for fixing aircraft, we are also doing our part to protect the base and all personnel working at Shindand Airfield," said Küster.

"Our company is doing everything it can to help out in any way we can when (the Soldiers) aren't working on aircraft. If we don't do our part, we wouldn't be team players in the overall mission of the Coalition in Afghanistan."



Spc. Nick Higgins, Co. C, 25th Avn. Rgt., loosens a bolt on an ejector rack. Ejector racks are attached to the weapons pylon arms on OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters.

PERSCO: Personnel team provides customer service

continued from Page 12

troops seeking their assistance can offer is patience, said Henriques.

"The challenge we face is that PERSCO isn't our everyday job," said Smith. "But we are willing to hunt down the instructions, regulations or find someone who can help us figure out what needs to be done."

Leaders here have noticed how the

"combat personnelists go above and beyond" in helping take care of the details that, if ignored, could hurt an Airman's career now or in the near future.

"Our PERSCO team is doing amazing things, providing the gamut of mission support, squadron support, one would only expect at home, including many areas outside their expertise. If it needs to be done, they consider it their job to do it,"

said Lt. Col. Richard Marks, 455th Expeditionary Support Squadron commander.

"The outstanding customer service this two-person team provides from boots on the ground to wheels up has ensured that personnel needs are being met, which allows our troops to deliver the vital OEF combat support necessary for mission success."

REF: On-the-spot engineering enhances mission

continued from Page 6

tongue-in-cheek name by REF technician Eric Graham, who designed and built the camera using materials he had in the REF workshop.

"Within the first 10 or 11 hours I had the first one done and there we had it," said Graham.

Then it was time for the Soldiers to test the GRAMCAM to find out if it would truly benefit the mission.

"We get a better view of the undercarriage of the vehicle," said Staff Sgt. Kevin Runyan, Kandahar Airfield Provost Marshall's Office operations sergeant. "It's better for the Soldiers to use. It's a confidence thing, knowing you can see better under the vehicles."

"It makes our life easier," agreed Spc. Jason Wiegand, 209th MP Co. He then wondered aloud when they would be getting more GRAMCAMs to use for inspections.

And that presents the hardest part of the technician's job, not the actual design

or construction of the projects, but "just trying to fit the supply and demand," explained Graham.

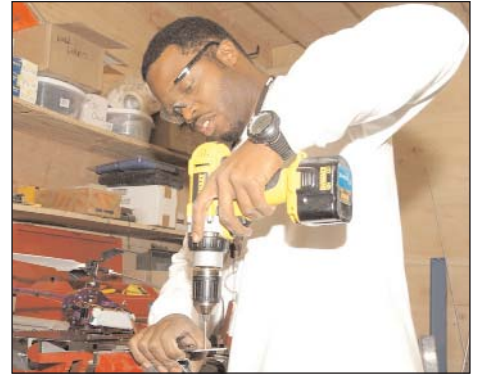
Ideas for projects come from many sources – unit leaders, Soldiers seeking an improvement on their systems, and even the technicians themselves.

REF works with its headquarters at Fort Belvoir, Va., to complete projects. Designs are sent to various laboratories, and the project is completed and then is sent back to Kandahar for testing by the Soldiers.

"Basically Soldiers tell us if a piece of equipment works or if we need to improve it or try something different," said Bell. "If it is successful but it just needs some adjustments made, the technicians here will adjust it."

And sometimes it isn't a matter of inventing something new, but of passing the new technology on to another unit.

"Soldiers and leaders tell us, 'Here is what we need,'" said Holland. "And sometimes we can say, 'We have that. We've already invented that wheel.'"



Staff Sgt. Monica R. Garreau

Eric Graham, REF technician, drills holes on a hinge to connect the handle to the base plate of the GRAMCAM, a device for inspecting vehicles.

But the REF mission isn't just about the technicians having fun inventing new toys for Soldiers, although that is another part of the job for Graham. It's about meeting the needs of the Soldiers.

"Being rapid, I like it," said Graham. "I like that a Soldier can come in here and have a need, and I can find a solution."

Buhain: Deployments teach medic value of life

continued from Page 5

Afghanistan in September to fill his role as the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team medical noncommissioned officer in charge. No longer surrounded by death in a combat support hospital, he

is seeing a different side of combat.

"Through everything, I've met so many people. I've felt pain, anger and depression. When I got here, I hated everything," he said. "But now I see the difference. (Here) we're transitioning and

rebuilding. It lets me know that there's definitely hope.

"I still visualize all the terrible things I've seen – I have nights I can't sleep. But it's good for me."

These memories remind Buhain why he's here.

"People call me a hero, but

I'm not," he said. "It's nice to be called a hero, but the heroes are the men and women who died. I'm alive now because of those who died. And I think it's all worth it. I know I would be willing to give my life for my country."

Letters to the Editor

The *Freedom Watch* would like to publish your opinions on topics of importance and interest to those serving in OEF.

Please send your thoughts in letter form to the editor. All letters e-mailed must include full name, unit, address and, when possible, telephone number. We will not print anonymous letters. Please limit all letters to 200 words or less.

We reserve the right to edit letters for length, clarity and decorum.

Please avoid implying criticism of U.S. or DoD policies and programs, advocating or disputing specific political, diplomatic or legislative matters, or implying criticism of host nation or host nation sensitivities.

Please send your letters to: stumpc@baf.afgn.army.mil

We look forward to hearing from you!

OEF "Values" Essay Contest

Personnel in Afghanistan are invited to participate in the Operation Enduring Freedom bi-monthly "Values" Essay Contest sponsored by CJTF-76.

The current value is "**Respect.**"

Rules

- ☐ Essays should include the definition of the featured value and your own experience(s) that reinforce this value
- ☐ Essays will be at least one and no more than two pages (typed/neatly printed and double-spaced)
- ☐ Please include a cover page with Title, Author's Name, Supervisor's Name, Unit/Organization, Phone Number and e-mail address if available
- ☐ Do not put name directly on essay
- ☐ Submit essays to EO Adviser nearest your location, via e-mail or hard copy by **Jan. 10.**

The winning essay writer will receive a CJTF-76 Commanding General's Certificate of Achievement and other prizes to be announced. The essay will also be published in a future issue of the *Freedom Watch*, and in the bi-monthly EO Update.

EO is also looking for E-7s and above to help review essay submissions and select the winning essay.

Call the Bagram EO Senior Adviser at DSN 318-231-3021 for more information.

A photograph showing a US Marine in camouflage gear, including a helmet and a rifle, interacting with a young girl and her family. The girl is looking up at the Marine with a smile. The Marine is holding the girl's hand. In the background, a woman and another child are visible. The scene is set in a conflict zone, likely Afghanistan, during Operation Enduring Freedom.

Freedom Watch

January 9, 2005

***We're fighting
for their
future, too***

**Operation
Enduring
Freedom**